



Floyd Perry (center) conducts a workshop in Louisville, CO. Photos courtesy: Floyd Perry.

Floyd Perry — *sportsTURF*'s Manager of the Year

By Chris Turner

Floyd Perry was trying to think of who it could have been to play such a telephone prank.

His wife, Libby, had just told him that a caller wanted to get his reaction to being named *sportsTURF* magazine's 1996 Manager of the Year.

"I was completely taken off guard," he said. "There are so many super people in the sports maintenance industry. It's truly unbelievable."

Unbelievable to Perry, maybe, but no prank. Perry is founder and owner of Grounds Maintenance Services, based in Orlando, FL, and is the author of many articles, a set of books titled *Pictorial Guide to Quality Grounds-keeping*, and two instructional videos titled "The ABC's of Grounds Maintenance for Baseball and Softball."

"The award goes to someone who has been very helpful to other sports turf managers through the contribution they have made to the profession," said Jim Williams, editor of the magazine. "Floyd has done that."

Working Around the Country

Much of Perry's contribution to grounds maintenance has come in the

way of 80 one-day workshops and four multi-day academies held around the country throughout the year. He travels thousands of miles toting subtle — but useful — gadgets to cities where parks and recreation departments are often short of manpower and low of budget.

In the workshop he introduces many tools that he has designed specifically for athletic grounds maintenance use. Some tools have evolved from the landscaping profession, but as Perry says, athletic field maintenance is not landscaping. Field maintenance is a precise profession, and landscaping tools often won't do the trick.

"The most satisfying aspect of these seminars is the people," he said. "I see a metamorphosis taking place on the grass roots level of athletic maintenance. The changes are being achieved by groundskeepers who creatively take home what they learn and actively make things happen. I also see more pride in the job expressed through staff uniforms, curbside appeal, extra effort, quality questions and, in general, more interest.

"I probably learn as much from the people who attend the academies as they do from me."

Moving Forward

Perry was once in the shoes of the people he now helps. He served for 20 years as a high school and college baseball coach and was director of baseball operations at Baseball City in Orlando, where he was responsible for field scheduling and tournaments. When Baseball City closed, he and Libby began Grounds Maintenance Services. Libby travels with Floyd and contributes much to his philosophy in helping people in the grounds industry.

"As someone who has had a passion for working on athletic facilities since as a player and coach, I know the value of what a little assistance can do," Perry said.

Perry sees a bright future for the grounds maintenance profession and believes that it will continue to evolve, somewhat out of necessity.

"I see the insurance companies setting standards of excellence for athletic facilities like they've done for playgrounds, automobiles, and the pest spraying industry. I then see more efficient equipment being used to accomplish that task. There is a real liability factor, and everyone is looking at the groundskeepers now as to why a field



In one of Perry's annual spring workshops, turf managers at the grass roots level learn the art of professional logo painting.

wasn't safe to play on. I see a real need for groundskeepers to be able to learn ways to make their jobs easier and for playing surfaces to be prepared in a safer manner."

It's been a busy year for Perry, who served as a volunteer on the all-volunteer grounds crew that prepared the playing surface for the Olympic softball competition. He was one of 20 or so members of the crew that battled much rain and high humidity — and 18-hour work days — to keep the softball tournament on schedule. It came off without a hitch, but was an exhausting experience that Perry wouldn't trade for anything.

"It was a super highlight of 1996," Perry said. "Working with the grounds crew from Columbus, GA, was fun, and seeing the success that the recreation staff received in self-accomplishment and personal pride was worth it."

Perry will take a little time to reflect on his award and to rest, but knows the future — and 1997 — are rapidly approaching.

"It's something that hasn't sunken into my conscious thought since there



The purpose of Perry's "gadgets" — such as this device for setting mound blocks in high stress areas — is to make turf managers' jobs easier and playing surfaces safer.

are so many quality men and women in our industry doing solid jobs and not getting recognition," he said. "I just encourage them to move forward."

"I am, however, honored to be selected and will do all I can to continue the forward movement in the sports maintenance field."

Chris Turner is the sports editor for The Millington Star, Millington, TN. □

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